

#TheGetTogether

‘Chuck Norris doesn’t do Erasmus but if he did...’



(Missing from the picture Darko Mitevskil, Sabrina Apitz, Sasha Volakovaipv and Immanuel Xhavera)

When twenty-three people from 18 countries cover their travel to arrive at a location in the middle of nowhere, to join a programme that is not funded, participate in a schedule that does not yet exist, to chat about who knows what, to cook their own meals, clean up after themselves, where there is not a SALTO or National Agency in sight, where no strategy, policy or models of practice are on the agenda, where no reporting is required, and no objectives and outcomes have to be met, but when evaluated across 23 questions averages 9.73 out of 10. Yip, that’s The Get Together: Time for You – A place of Stories, Connection, Reflection.

WHAT WAS THE GET TOGETHER?

'The Get Together': Time for You - Stories, Connection, Reflection and Recharge was a 5-day programme designed to create space for Youth Work practitioners and Non-Formal Educators to come together to foster interpersonal connection, share ideas, visions, aspirations, and non-work stories, spend quality time together, enjoy each other's company and for a short period of time leave everyday policy, practice, programmes and strategy behind.

Co-ordinated by *The Youth Work & Trainers Bazaar*, it was very kindly hosted by *NaturKultur e.V.* in the beautiful surroundings of their [KulturHaus](#) (just outside) Bremen, Germany between 26th and 30th August 2024..

The initiative was not in receipt of any funding. *NaturKultur e.V* agreed to cover the costs of hosting *'The Get Together.'* With a desire to give back to the community of practitioners, they took care of all costs associated with providing accommodation and meals. Participants covered all their travel costs to and from the venue. For two participants - coming from Algeria and The West Bank – this included securing visas. There were two calls for participants made through SALTO – 237 applications were received in the first round, and 63 in the second round.

'The Get Together' provided space for practitioners to join colleagues and peers for a few days where relaxed conversation and recharging were at the heart of the time spent together and where regular work, i.e., Erasmus+ (and similar) was left aside momentarily. Rest, connection, conversation, and recharge were very much central to the programme.

'The Get Together' created time for practitioners to come together as individuals rather than as professionals and share stories, experiences, ideas and thoughts, reflection, the outdoors, health and wellbeing activities, and learn about non-work activities that other colleagues are involved in.

The overall aim of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for practitioners to connect with one another, but rather than (as is 'the norm' with international youth work gatherings) focus on developing programmes and projects or to discuss policy and strategy, or even the evolution of models of practice, or sample new tools or ways of working, we wanted to create space for individuals to engage with one another at a more informal and human level, and make time to be together, a criticism we often hear from practitioners that they don't have enough off in the normal large in-person youth work events.

Providing opportunities for practitioners to sit and chat about issues important to them rather than their organisation or community of interest, or the pressure of having to report back or the obligation of having to create a list of actions they must implement post-programme was vitally important. Just to have the option of sitting back, relaxing and enjoy each other's company without a sense of obligation, guilt, compulsion or necessity is rarely afforded at any large in-person gathering in 'Erasmus World'

We were keen to explore moments together where the emphasis was on fun, enjoyment, and laughter, and other pro-social elements, but equally, ensure moments of serenity and calm, as well as creating memories and appreciating time together away from intense and often demanding schedules and environments that have come to dominate the Youth Work agenda.

Only on the first evening of the programme was the schedule for the remainder of the programme finalised and this came in the form of offers made by participants. Work was done prior to the programme in nurturing and supporting participants to think about their offers, but this was in no way fixed, and only became fully finalised on the first half of Day 1. You can find the offers overleaf.

Individual Offers	Who	Interested Numbers
1. AI and Beyond	Dominik	3
2. Sport and Physical Action: Games, Cycling & Going to the Forest	Nur	3
3. Guided Meditation	Roy	4
4. Bodywork in Pairs: giving each other relaxation	Mags	4
5. Music Therapy	Fergal	8
6. Jam Session around the fire	Laia & Sasha	7
7. Forest Yoga	Zoia	5
8. Arts (Docu Theatre) as a tool for Social Change & Reflection	Sasha	3
9. Creative Expression Workshop: Blank Pages	Chiamaka	6
10. The Power of Humour	Fergal	11
11. What do I need to be me – What do I need to be myself	Michelle	5
12. Telling an Inspiring Story	Zoia	2
13. Darko: Dreams – Stories, Concepts, Challenges, Come True... (Next to the Fire)	Darko	0
14. Yes you can do story telling -	Javi	0
15. What you always wanted to know about youth work and never dared to ask	Javi	5
16. Poetry Slam	Fergal	8
17. Well-being in times of crisis (for Youth Workers, Educators, Trainers), Fears and Proposals	Eleni	6
18. Bonfire, Marshmallows and Funny Stories to tell	Darko	14
19. Stand Up Comedy Act	Billy	5
20. Innoventeur Frameweurk & Blox	Joe	4
21. Henna Drawing	Dina	1
22. Games and Interactive Activities	Liza	3
23. Table Games – Tora, Haha	Zoia	3
24. AI – Evil Incarnate or Blessing in Disguise	Roy	3
25. Storytelling – Creating the spontaneous Introduction of a spontaneous story	Soula	3
26. I bring 2 board games with me we can play together	Alaa	2

TESTIMONIALS

The Get Together was essentially an experiment in the art of the possible which chooses to focus on the individuals that form part of the Youth Work, Non-Formal and Erasmus collective rather than organisations and builds and nurtures connection from within, rather than the pressure, expectation and agenda of without. The connection is built on the offers that participants bring, which are based on their passions and their interests and how they want to share space and time with others in attendance.


Here is what some had to say about The Get Together.

- The Get Together to me, was exactly how it should have been - right people, right place, right time. At the time I said we would only realise how special The Get Together was when we returned home and began telling people what happened, anyone worked it out yet? I hope there will be another one that will involve new people, new stories & new countries.'

- I suppose I should be more critical and offer constructive criticism, but honestly, it's impossible. I had the best time! Thank you so much!

- This was my first participation in a foreign project, I would like to thank everyone for giving me this experience. I'm so happy to be on The Get Together.

- I truly liked everything ,it was an amazing opportunity for people to meet and exchange ideas ,the location was fabulous...my only comment is that definately we would need one more day so that we could watch all sessions as some were on to the other. My sincere thanks to the people in charge for such a 'spectaculous' event.

- Amazing and unique... unforgettable... I appreciated the way the event was planned and executed... felt effortlessly (but I know it must have been loads of work and investment by the organizers to make it happen!)... and relaxing, while also eventful (loads of content, amazing people & stories, space for everyone...)... Thanx!!! 


- It was a really nice and charming experience.

- I made some connections that I hope will last an eternity such was the impact on my soul.

- Exceeded expectations, especially the food which I really thought I would have a problem with but didn't (friends, old and new, made sure of that). The concept of attend what suits you and no requirement to attend on time is a good one, but did make it difficult I think for those running sessions, I found this part quite difficult. Not having to attend what I term as "voodoo" stuff was a real plus for myself though. Not sure of any different way to organise these things though other than what we did, made for relaxation certainly, though what I had hoped for in terms of reflection (which I love) didn't materialise, guess it's not a topic of interest to many others.

- Thank you so much! It was really amazing time together! I'm so happy to meet all of you and hope to see you soon!

- Thank so much for this great opportunity, the space, the trust, the effort no words can express how happy I am that I joined you in such a harmonic group, the melody that I will carry in my heart and soul from you.

- Can we do it again 

- As a someone that's done quite a few Europe based programs, I normally can figure out what to expect, but with *The Get Together*, I really didn't know what to expect. I definitely enjoyed the difference environment we were presented with and the opportunity to take walks in the woods. The different workshop locations also made me more open to feeling different places inside the venue. Connections - what can I say about the connections? Well, they were amazing! The chance to bond with people from different places, cultures, religions gave me a chance to see the whole world in a completely different way. I will cherish this opportunity forever and a day. Hopefully, we will get another go at creating something equally as spellbinding as this was.

- Are you interested in an awesome experience among people from different countries and culture where the spirit of caring and giving could be present? Then the 'Met Together' gathering would be ideal for you. People who yearn for knowledge, meeting new individuals exchanging ideas on different subjects such as storytelling, AI aps, yoga etc gathered in Bremen enjoying the above. My stay at KulturHaus during 'The Get Together' meeting proved to be particularly beneficial as I learned a lot on the social side, meeting people from different places and cultures, I left emotionally complete as I listened to human stories, shared human concerns, freed from types thanks to the kindness and positive attitude of the attendees. In truth, I enjoyed being myself, indeed relaxed as that was the purpose of the meeting, to get to know colleagues better and spend meaningful time together, away from stressful schedules. 'The Get Together' gave me the opportunity, to relax, to listen, to exchange knowledge and information on various subjects without any restrictions and without insistence on time frames. What I would by no means omit to mention is the amazing accommodation in a 'spectacular' environment, in the heart of a forest, listening to the sounds of the night and gazing at the starry sky. In short, such events should be a panacea for all of us. Knowledge and sentiments spread everywhere. I would like to thank 'The Get Together' Team for the amazing idea and offering, I hope we will soon meet somewhere.

- Recently I have been reflecting on all aspects of my life. What more do I want from my life? Well the answer to that is not much really. But I do know what I miss....A LOT, that is the friendships, learning opportunities, cultural interaction that the Erasmus projects brought me over 20 years of that nomadic, exciting life. *The Get Together* brought all that back to me. I even appreciated the activities that weren't that appealing to me, but I know that others were finding so much enjoyment and wellness from (yoga, meditation, massage, bonfire sessions). It was a wonderful idea and created a wonderful atmosphere where there was something for everybody, a place to relax, to find yourself, to recharge the batteries and to make new and wonderful friends. I do hope that we get the chance to do it again sometime. Thanks for this great opportunity and for the chance to bring two of my closest friends along with me. We carried on our adventure in Rotterdam for the weekend and with continued reflection on a great week.

- I have always been amazed by the feeling of being with the "European family". I know that this type of meetings where everyone feels a different calling and comes are a "bubble" that moves away from the reality of day to day but for that itself is a place and a space where you are allowed to BE in its entire extent and is a amazing feeling of freedom and confidence, which is very addictive and in fact addictive. Sometimes the faces change, and not the same people, but the feeling remains. Isn't that strange? This week in Bremen, with fellow formers from 17 countries that we chose to come to meet and meet without any kind of funding has been really magical, it is what I needed and I will be very grateful to the person who invited me (Fergal) always. This week was here, but I'm lucky, and I feel very grateful for it, to have had similar experiences in many places in Europe. I know it's starting to be seen a lot but the feeling of gratitude I experience makes me feel very fortunate and eager to give back everything I take.

PARTICIPANTS

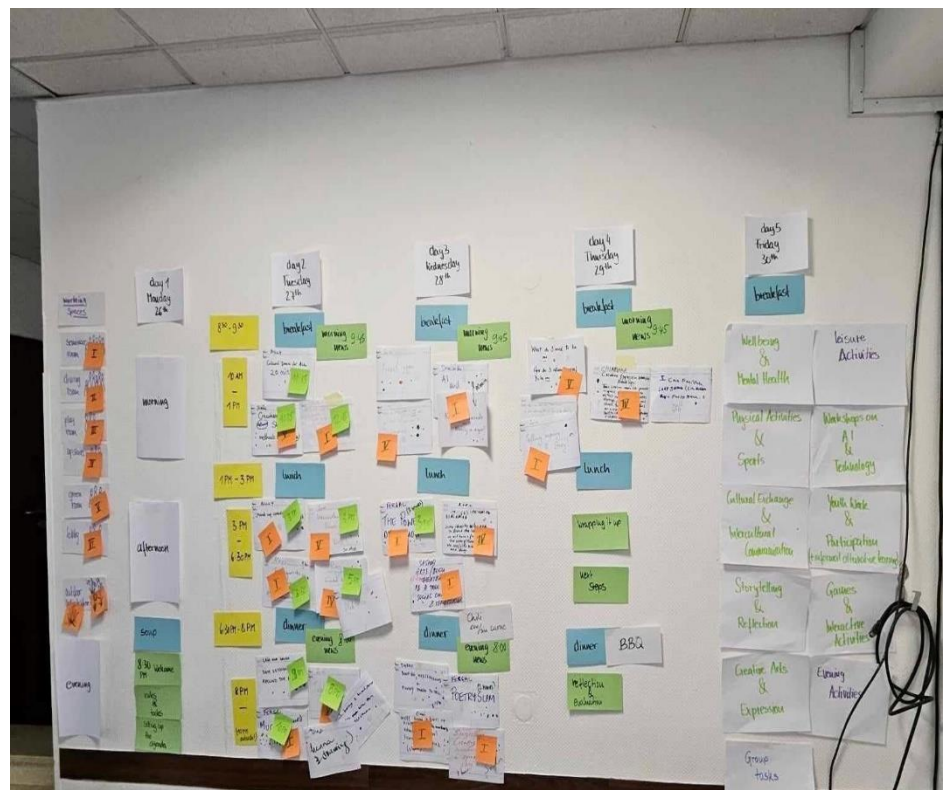
	Participant	Country
1.	Joseph Conere	Ireland
2.	Dragana (Dina) Mitrovikj	Macedonia
3.	Eleni Plevra	Greece
4.	Soula Tsiatsiou	Greece
5.	Roy Samuels	Poland & England
6.	Billy Hillman	Wales
7.	Zoia Polytsia	Ukraine
8.	Oleksandra Volakovaipv	Poland
9.	Javi Quilez	Spain
10.	Magdalena Szmytke	Poland
11.	Michelle DeBona	Malta
12.	Laia Figueras Alsius	Spain
13.	Elizaveta Chukharova	Czech Republic
14.	Nur Karim	Azerbaijan
15.	Steliana Rudco	Moldova
16.	Chiamaka Akpuogwu	Nigeria
17.	Alaa abd- Almajid	Palestine
18.	Abdelaaziz ZIADI	Algeria
19.	Emanuel Xhavera	Albania

ORGANISING TEAM

Role	Who	Country
Host Organisation & Logistics	Darko Mitevski	Macedonia
Co-ordination & Communication	Fergal Barr	Northern Ireland
Facilitation & Schedule	Dominik Ringler	Germany
Organisational Support	Sabrina Apitz	Germany
Initial Working Group	All above + Dagna Gmitrowicz & Mara Formiga Rabiga	Poland

GALLERY





EVALUATION

1. The concept	2. Information	3. Information	4. The Venue	5. The Meeting	6. Breakout	7. The quality	8. Responding	9. The location	10. The way	11. The way	12. The group	13. The diversity	14. The pace	15. The way	16. My contribution	17. The impact	18. My desire	19. I would make	20. The amount	21. Time for	22. Time for	23. Time for	24. Time for	
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10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	8	7	8	9	10	
9.889	9.278	9	9.611	10	9.944	9.333	9.611	9.667	9.444	9.611	9.667	10	9.611	9.444	7.944	9.222	9.667	9.667	8.333	8.722	9.222	8.389	8.611	9.734

<p>1. The concept and idea behind The Get Together</p> <p>2. Information you received before you joined The Get Together</p> <p>3. Information you received during The Get Together</p> <p>4. The Venue</p> <p>5. The Meeting Room</p> <p>6. Breakout Spaces</p> <p>7. The quality and range of food on offer</p> <p>8. Responding to the needs of participants that arose during the programme</p>	<p>9. The location and setting</p> <p>10. The way in which The Get Together was organised</p> <p>11. The way in which The Get Together was facilitated</p> <p>12. The group dynamic / atmosphere</p> <p>13. The diversity of the group</p> <p>14. The pace of The Get Together</p> <p>15. The way in which any issues that arose were dealt with</p> <p>16. My contribution to all elements of The Get Together</p> <p>17. The impact it has made on me</p>	<p>18. My desire to build upon the experience you had at The Get Together</p> <p>19. I would make the effort again to attend even though I know I have to cover my travel costs</p> <p>20. The amount of time I had for myself</p> <p>21. Time for Storytelling</p> <p>22. Time for Connection</p> <p>23. Time for Reflection</p> <p>24. Time for Recharge</p>
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INFORMATION PACK

The Get Together



NaturKultur e.V. and **KulturHaus** are happy to be your host for *The Get Together*, self-organised by the community of practice.

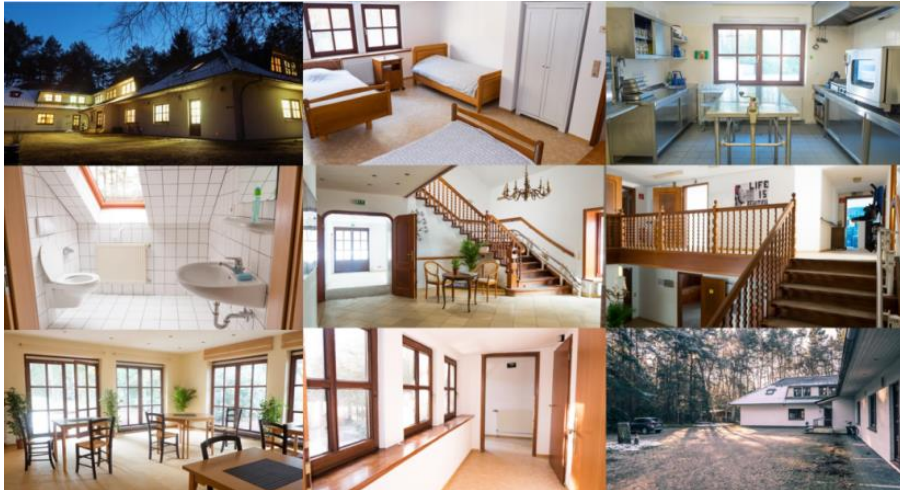
Dates: 26.-30. August 2024

Venue [KulturHaus](#), Hinterm Horn 5, 27711 Osterholz-Scharmbeck, Germany

Number of participants: Approx 20-25

Target group: This gathering is for those that have been involved in Erasmus+ (or similar) but are drawn from the world of Youth Work and Non-Formal Education/Learning. It is targeted at Youth Workers, Youth Leaders, Trainers, Facilitators and Moderators, Project Managers, Policy Makers, Mentors, Coaches, Researchers and Academics who are involved in or have history with Erasmus+. Participants will range in gender, age, background, nationality, identity and experience.

Venue



Accommodation is basic, something like a youth hostel, which is actually an old group house in a middle of nowhere. But it will be clean, comfortable, homely and welcoming.

Garlstedt is a small village/suburb in the surrounding area of Bremen in Germany and it's a youth house managed by NaturKultur. Here is some information about the venue.

The rooms are going to be 2-6 beds per room. It is a youth house, not a hotel, we are going to be of mixed nationalities. There are showers in most of the rooms or just in front of the room. Please expect simple accommodation.

We will be the only group in the house. It was important to us not to be bothered with other groups and other timetables and rules, so that is why we decided to come here where we would be alone. We will share the space, nature, enjoy the offers of participants, cook and eat together, load the dishwasher, and make sure that the door is locked at night. We will make the rules together, and as we will live together for a few days, we expect you to respect the rules that we make. You know how this goes. You have done enough programmes.

We will cook and prepare the meals together – NaturKultur will provide the food and groceries, but we will all help with the preparation of food, cleaning after the meals, preparing barbecue or pancakes together.

Shoes for inside. Since we would be staying inside most of the time, and it is a really large house, you would need shoes for inside the house (slippers or clean shoes). There is a policy of no “outside” shoes inside. It also helps us keep the place clean during our time there.

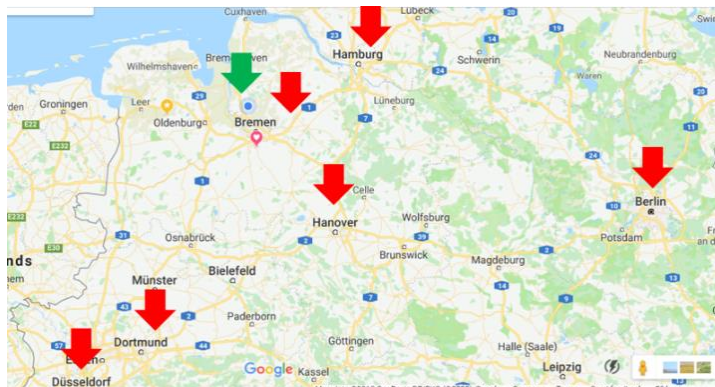
Bring your own towel. There will be bed sheets and linen provided from the venue, but you must bring a towel with you.

Make sure that you take any medication that you need. There is a first aid kit in the house and list of emergency doctors' offices available for consultation when needed (so please make sure that you have insurance or that your national insurance card covers Germany).

Individual needs: if you have any dietary or medical needs it is important to let us know in advance so that we are aware and can endeavour to ensure that these are catered for. You should communicate this to darkomitevski@naturkultur.eu. Please note that Darko is on vacation between 3rd and 19th August).

Flight information and airports

You can fly to Bremen, Hamburg, Hannover, Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt or Dortmund. It will take you 1.5-4h of trains or busses to reach Osterholz-Scharmbeck. You can take a direct flight to some of the surrounding cities, and then book sustainable trains/busses for you to the venue.



From the airport to Bremen

Busses www.flixbus.de Trains www.bahn.de

When you reach any of these towns or airports, you can take a train or bus to Bremen. When arriving in Hanover or Hamburg, there is a regional group ticket called Lower Saxony ticket for this region. This ticket includes the bus ride to KulturHaus.

The venue is 40 min bus ride from Bremen Central Station. The bus number 660 to Hagen and back. The ticket is 6,90 Euro and is good for whole territory of Bremen (from airport to central station and to KulturHaus is the same ticket).

Station: **OHZ-Garlstedt, BW Logistikschule**. From there is 5 minutes' walk to Kulturhaus. Check the schedule here: <https://www.vbn.de/en/service/timetables>

Insurance: We recommend that every participant should have valid health insurance for Germany during your stay on the gathering. This means that when you don't have your own insurance, the organiser doesn't bear any responsibility towards the participants. Everyone is required to have health insurance during the gathering dates or on their European Health Card (for EU citizens only).

ATM & cash: In Germany all major credit and debit cards are accepted. However, Garlstedt is really small village and there are no ATMs. In the venue no cards are accepted so make sure that you have some cash with you when you need something from the shop or some drinks from the vending machine.

Clothes: Make sure that you bring comfortable clothes. We are in North Germany, close to the North Sea and it can be cold and windy although its summer. The temperature in the time of the project should be between 20 and 30 degrees Celsius. We will also have outdoor activities, where some activities will be held outside.

Organising Team

The Get Together is the culmination of the efforts of several individuals within 'the field' who have helped to make this gathering possible.

Role	Who	E-mail
Host Organisation & Logistics	Darko Mitevski	darkomitevski@naturkultur.eu
Co-ordination & Communication	Fergal Barr	thekingisalive@hotmail.com
Facilitation & Schedule	Dominik Ringler Dagna Gmitrowicz	dominik.ringler@kijubb.de guideinnature@gmail.com
Organisational Support	Sabrina Apitz	sabrina.apitz@googlemail.com

A reminder about why we are meeting



The Get Together: Time for You - Stories, Connection, Reflection and Recharge is about creating space for Youth Work practitioners and Non-Formal Educators to come together to foster interpersonal connection, share ideas, visions, aspirations and non-work stories, spend quality time together, enjoy each other's company and for a short period of time leave everyday policy, practice, programmes and strategy behind.

The aim of the meeting is to provide an opportunity for practitioners to connect with one another, but rather than (as is *the norm* with international youth work gatherings) focus on developing programmes and projects or to discuss policy and strategy, or even the evolution of models of practice, or sample new tools or ways of working, we want to create space(s) for individuals to engage with one another at a more informal and human level, and make time to just be together.

For a full reminder of the thinking behind *The Get Together* click on the link: [SALTO-YOUTH - European Training Calendar - Second Call for: 'The Get Together': Time for You - Stories, Connection, Reflection and Recharge](#)

What *The Get Together* IS NOT...

The Get Together is different from other programmes in that it's not funded¹ or supported by any National Agency or SALTO or similar and it is not on any youth work agenda, policy or strategy. It is the outcome of conversations with colleagues from 'the field' who recognise the importance of bringing their peers together in an atmosphere of connection where the focus revolves around the individual rather than the practitioner but ultimately the human being that lies behind the practitioner, because 'the field' doesn't exist without them.

The programme is self-organised and co-designed with those that are coming. All activities will be based on 'offers' from those in attendance. Unlike most programmes we are not convening a meeting to discuss current policy, build partnerships, formalise networking, develop new models of practice, have intercultural evenings, or provide space for promoting your organisation. If these things happen naturally during our time together that is ok, but please don't have this expectation.

¹ You can make a donation to NaturKultur e.V. and KulturHaus to help with the costs of running the programme.

What we ask of you...

We appreciate you are giving up time and paying for your travel to join us, so we don't want you to be disappointed either. The time that we will spend together will be shared by 'the offers' that you will bring.

This is not about offers to test new models or methodologies for your organisation, your practice or your company, but rather focused on sharing experiences and passions that you might not normally have the chance to show. It is also about creating and having fun rather than having to be serious or appear to be serious, and in doing so nurturing connection where time normally doesn't allow. The time together will also be about generating rest, reflection and regeneration through our own resources and the natural environment we find ourselves in.

As this time together is also self-organised, just a reminder that we also ask for your support with helping to cook, clean and maintain the surroundings we will gather in. We kindly thank you for that in advance.

Organisers

The Get Together is organised by [The Youth Work & Trainers Bazaar](#) in association with [NaturKultur e.V.](#) and [KulturHaus](#). With a desire to give back to the community of practitioners, NaturKultur e.V. and KulturHaus will not only take care of accommodation but meals also.